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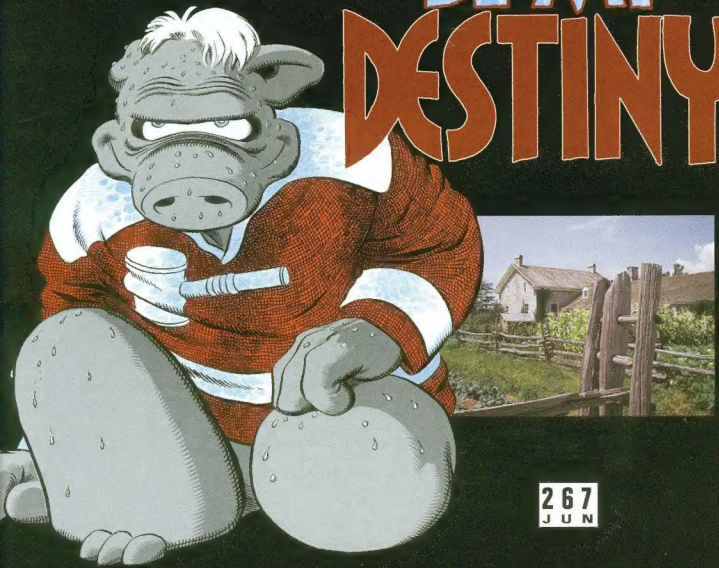
CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 2

IF FIVE-BAR GATE BE MY DESTINY



267
JUN

correspondence

AARDVARK COMMENT

Gary Groth
Fantagraphics Books,
Seattle, Washington

Let me respond to something you wrote about me in the last *Cerebus (264 "Dear Jeff Smith");* your option, of course, as to whether you're willing to print it.

You wrote, in the context of calling Jeff Smith a liar, that "there was a time when virtually the entire direct market—most especially publishers like Gary Groth, Denis Kitchen and Mike Richardson—made a great point of the fact that self-publishing was not a viable option and that Dave Sim was the 'exception that proved the rule.'"

Not to put too fine a point on it, and speaking only for myself, this is a lie. (I'm not speaking for Kitchen or Richardson, of course, although I suspect Richardson, at least, probably was too busy to give a shit about proselytizing against self-publishing). To repeat: I never argued that self-publishing wasn't a viable option. I merely argued against your own position that it was the only viable and honorable option and against your repeated intimations that the success rate of self-publishing was far greater than it, in fact, was (a fact you later admitted, rather ignominiously, in the introduction to your *Cerebus* self-publisher's manual). My own position was—roughly—that self-publishing was about as viable an option as finding a decent publisher, probably a little less viable than finding any publisher at all, and probably more viable than becoming a neuro-surgeon or an Ambassador to the United Nations. In the event, I think I was proved right.

I'm going to wait until I see how you do against Jeff before I call you out on this, man to man. I'm not as dumb as I look.

Well, of course *you aren't, Gary.* No one *could be* that *dumb. (Sorry, sorry. Formula joke).*

I consider this entirely different from my "Jeff problem". You and I disagree vehemently about just about everything—but when you have written about any of our past conversations in the Journal *(most recently when you recounted our chat about Carol Kalish) you often* misinterpret *what I said but you never* manufacture out of whole cloth *what I said. And you would certainly* never *say that you threatened me if you hadn't. Nor would* I *say that I threatened* you *if I hadn't. In either of our cases, in "the secret councils of our sleep,"* admitting *that you threatened to give the other guy a fat lip would be tantamount to admitting that he had gotten the better of you in the intellectual arena so that "oh, yeah?" and a punch in the mouth was the only recourse left. No matter how hard the punch was which was thrown, the recipient would be grinning like a Cheshire cat eating shit for* months *afterwards.*

In Jeff's case, I just don't get it. I assumed *that he manufactured his threat in order to* force *me to fight him. I gave him almost two months notice that I was coming to Columbus for the* SPACE *show and even booked a flight three days early in order to give him several days to pick from. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. So he strolls up to the table on Saturday and says, "So where are the gloves?" I said, "Back at the hotel room." I had chosen to bring them at the last minute even though I had received his letter that I printed last issue. Anyone who can go from self-publishing to Image and back to self-publishing is obviously capable of changing his mind about* anything. *"Enjoy the rest of your stay in Columbus," he says. And walks away. As I say, I just don't get it. Anyway, what were we talking about? Oh, right...*

Continued in back...

CEREBUS
NO. 267 JUNE 2001

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•
PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)
•
BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
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•
BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

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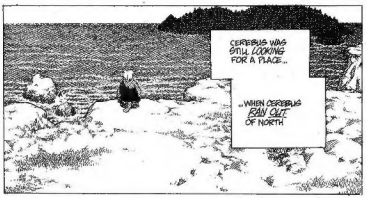
NORTH.
(AGAIN)

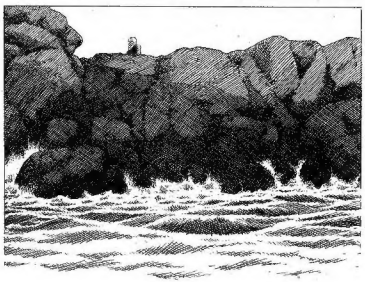
NORTH INTO **NORTHERN ISGHURIA** (MARK GUSCIORA'S HOMELAND) AWAY FROM CERBERUS' **SHAME** (AGAIN)

"MAYBE THAT WAS THE PROBLEM. MAYBE YOU HAD TO GO FURTHER NORTH TO FIND A NICE PLACE TO GET YOURSELF KILLED," CERBERUS THOUGHT

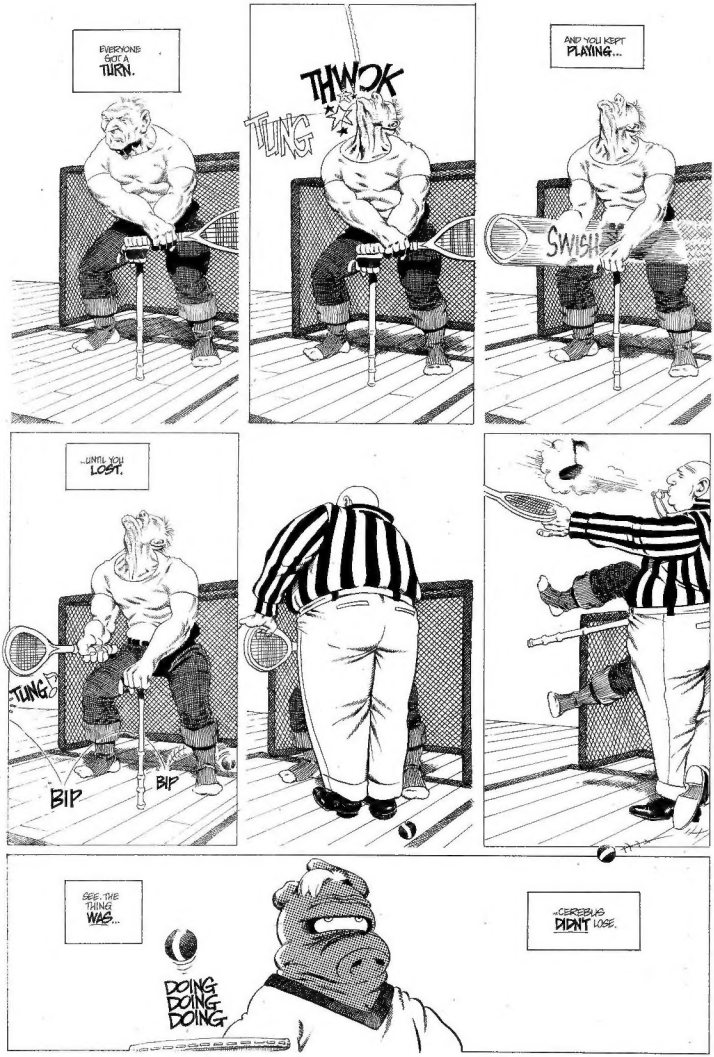


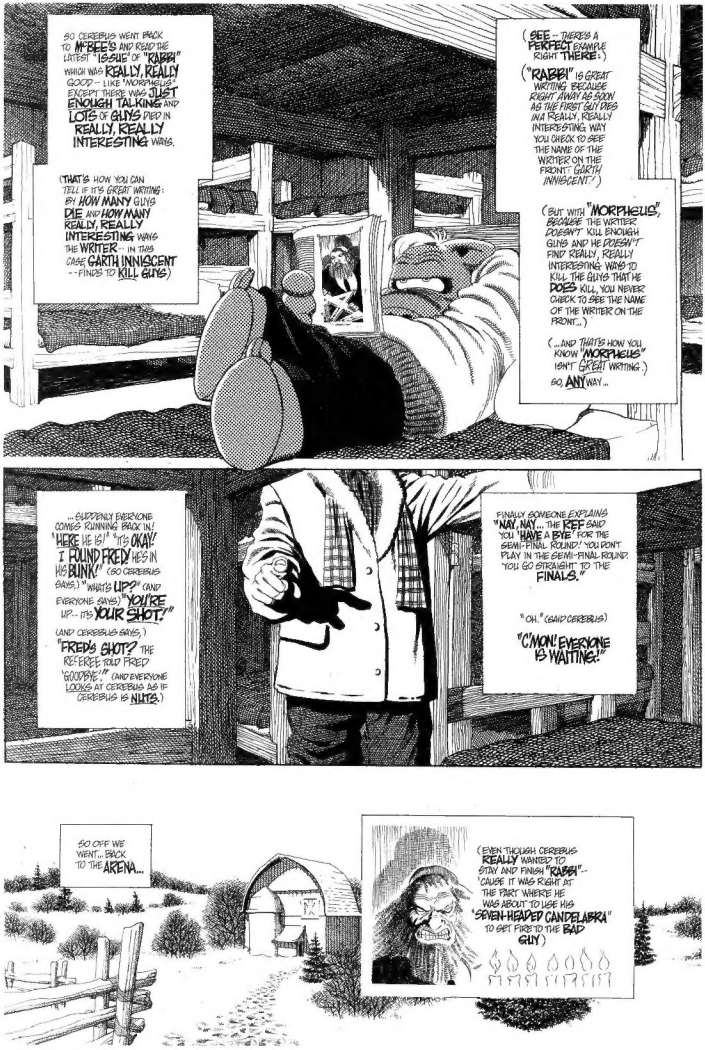
EAST.
THEN.

"IT SHOULD BE THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD TO GET YOURSELF KILLED." (THOUGHT CERBERUS)
"WANDERING AROUND IN THIS **FAGGY SHEPHERD OUTFIT.**"



WHEN HE "BLANKED IN" AGAIN CERBERUS WAS A TAVERN RESIDENT AT A PLACE CALLED McBEE'S...
McBEE'S TAVERN
AND THE NEXT TIME CERBERUS "BLANKED IN" AFTER THAT...
...IT WAS WINTER.
(CERBERUS HAD LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT AFTER SOMEONE HAD EXPLAINED TO HIM WHAT A "CALORIE" WAS)
SKSCH
SKSCH
(AND HOW MANY OF THEM THERE WERE IN THE CLOTTED CREAM AND BUTTER SAUCES ALL OF MRS GURGOYLE'S MEALS WERE SWIMMING IN)
SO ANYWAY, THIS ONE MORNING INSTEAD OF ALL THE TAVERN RESIDENTS GETTING MARCHED RIGHT OFF TO WORK...
(ICE FARMING, IN THE WINTER) (CERBERUS FOUND ICE A LOT EASIER TO DEAL WITH THAN SHEEP)
THEY MARCHED US INTO THIS STUFFY OLD BARN WITH THE WALLS LINED WITH ROWS OF BENCHES
IT WAS A REAL FIVE-BAR GATE ARENA (JUST LIKE BEAR HAD DESCRIBED THEM.)
(THE NORTHERN ISSHURIANS CLAIM TO HAVE INVENTED FIVE-BAR GATE...BUT - IN NORTHERN ISSHURIA IT'S PRACTICALLY THE STATE RELIGION)
(AS WE ALL FOUND OUT DURING THE "TEN-THIRTEEN CRISIS" YEARS LATER)
TUNG!
TANG!
THWOK
BIP
BIP
BIP
BIP
BIP


EVERYONE GOT A TURN.
THWOK
TUNG
AND YOU KEPT PLAYING...
SWISH
...UNTIL YOU LOST.
TUNG
BIP
BIP
SEE, THE THING WAS...
DOING DOING DOING
...CERBERUS DIDN'T LOSE.

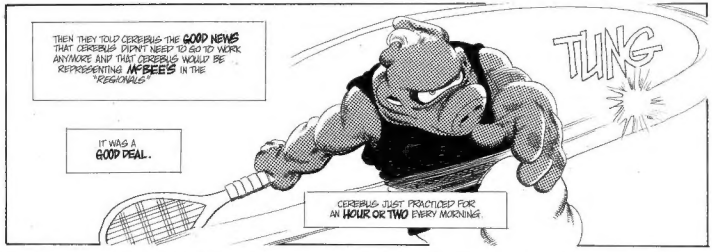

SO CERBERUS WENT BACK TO MR. BEE'S AND READ THE LATEST "ISSUE" OF "RABBI" WHICH WAS REALLY, REALLY GOOD -- LIKE "MORPHELLS" EXCEPT THERE WAS JUST ENOUGH TALKING AND LOTS OF GUYS DIED IN REALLY, REALLY INTERESTING WAYS.
(THAT'S HOW YOU CAN TELL IF IT'S GREAT WRITING: BY HOW MANY GUYS DIE AND HOW MANY REALLY, REALLY INTERESTING WAYS THE WRITER -- IN THIS CASE GARTH INNIGCENT -- FINDS TO KILL GUYS)
(SEE -- THERE'S A PERFECT EXAMPLE RIGHT THERE:)
("RABBI" IS GREAT WRITING BECAUSE RIGHT AWAY AS SOON AS THE FIRST GUY DIES IN A REALLY, REALLY INTERESTING WAY YOU CHECK TO SEE THE NAME OF THE WRITER ON THE FRONT: GARTH INNIGCENT.)
(BUT WITH "MORPHELLS", BECAUSE THE WRITER DOESN'T KILL ENOUGH GUYS AND HE DOESN'T FIND REALLY, REALLY INTERESTING WAYS TO KILL THE GUYS THAT HE DOES KILL, YOU NEVER CHECK TO SEE THE NAME OF THE WRITER ON THE FRONT...)
(...AND THAT'S HOW YOU KNOW "MORPHELLS" ISN'T GREAT WRITING.)
SO, ANY WAY...
...SUDDENLY EVERYONE COMES RUNNING BACK IN! "HERE HE IS!" "IT'S OKAY! I FOUND FRED! HE'S IN HIS BUNK!" (SO CERBERUS GAINS.) "WHAT'S UP?" (AND EVERYONE SAYS) "YOU'RE UP -- IT'S YOUR SHOT." (AND CERBERUS SAYS,) "FRED'S SHOT? THE REFEREE TOLD FRED 'GOODBYE'!" (AND EVERYONE LOOKS AT CERBERUS AS IF CERBERUS IS NUTS.)
FINALLY SOMEONE EXPLAINS "NAY, NAY... THE REF SAID YOU 'HAVE A BYE' FOR THE SEMI-FINAL ROUND! YOU DON'T PLAY IN THE SEMI-FINAL ROUND! YOU GO STRAIGHT TO THE FINALS."
"OH." (SAID CERBERUS)
"C'MON! EVERYONE IS WAITING!"
SO OFF WE WENT... BACK TO THE ARENA...
(EVEN THOUGH CERBERUS REALLY WANTED TO STAY AND FINISH "RABBI" -- 'CAUSE IT WAS RIGHT AT THE PART WHERE HE WAS ABOUT TO USE HIS "SEVEN-HEADED CANDELABRA" TO GET FIRE TO THE BAD GUY)

...WHERE CERBERUS HAD TO BEAT A GUY THAT CERBERUS HAD ALREADY BEATEN THAT MORNING...
TUNG
TUNG TUNG
THOCK
...THEN WATCH A GUY BEAT ANOTHER GUY (BOTH OF WHOM CERBERUS HAD ALREADY BEATEN)...
...AND THEN (AGAIN) BEAT THE GUY WHO BEAT THE OTHER GUY IN THE SAME CERBERUS JUST WATCHED.
TUNG TUNG THWOCK TUNG
AND THEN EVERYONE APPLAUDED CERBERUS!

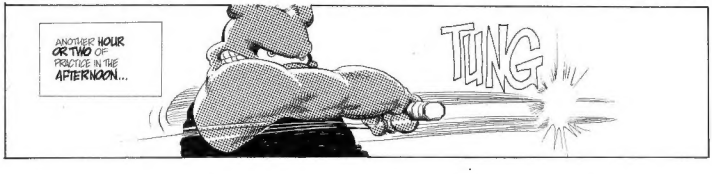
(CERBERUS HADN'T BEEN APPLAUDED SINCE HE WAS CAMPAIGNING TO BE PRIME MINISTER)

(BUT THIS WAS *DIFFERENT* BECAUSE THEY WERE APPLAUDING CERBERUS FOR ACTUALLY DOING SOMETHING)

(WHEN YOU'RE RUNNING FOR PRIME MINISTER PEOPLE ONLY APPLAUD BECAUSE THEY HOPE IF THEY APPLAUD LOUD ENOUGH, YOU'LL TAX EVERYONE ELSE AND GIVE THE MONEY TO THEM)


THEN THEY TOLD CERBERUS THE GOOD NEWS THAT CERBERUS DIDN'T NEED TO GO TO WORK ANYMORE AND THAT CERBERUS WOULD BE REPRESENTING McBEE'S IN THE "REGIONALS"
TUNG
IT WAS A GOOD DEAL.
CERBERUS JUST PRACTICED FOR AN HOUR OR TWO EVERY MORNING.

TOOK A STEAM-BATH.
HAD A MASSAGE.
WAPPITY-WAP WAPPITY-WAP WAPPITY-WAP
LUNCH.
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH



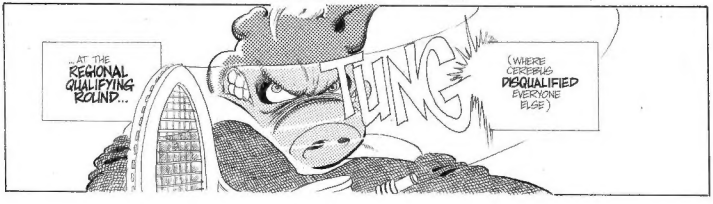
THEY CAME TO CEREBUS DURING PRACTICE ONE DAY AND ASKED CEREBUS "FRED WHAT?"
AND CEREBUS ASKED "WHAT FRED WHAT?" AND THEY ASKED "WHAT'S YOUR LAST NAME, FRED?..."
"...FOR THE BACK OF YOUR SWEATER..."
HAMMER

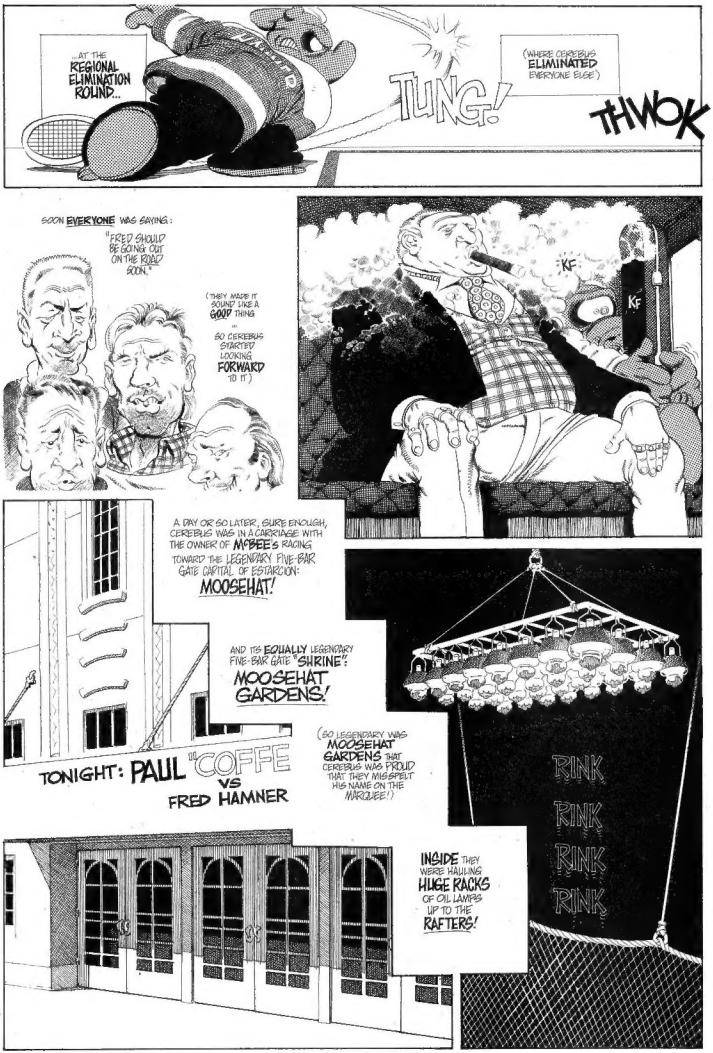
AND CEREBUS ALMOST SAID "FRED" (WHICH WOULD'VE BEEN AWFUL SPEND ALL THOSE YEARS ANSWERING TO "FRED FRED")

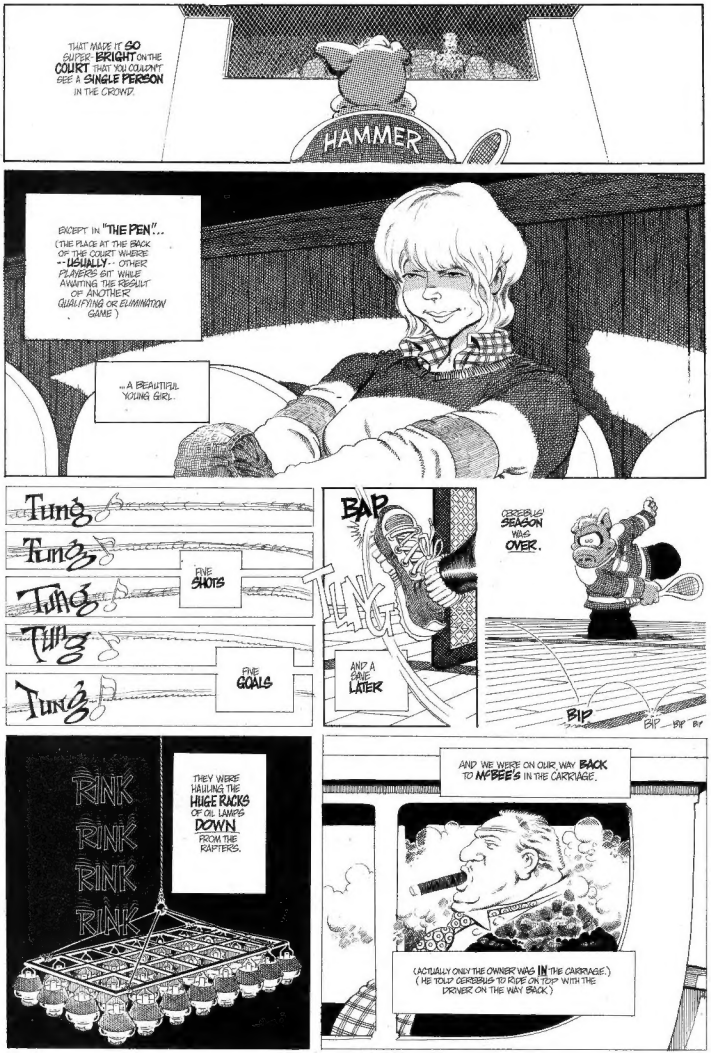
FORTUNATELY THEY WERE KA-THUNK KA-THUNK KA-THUNK KA-THUNK KA-THUNK KA-THUNK KA-THUNK KA-THUNK FIXING THE ARENA ROOF THAT DAY, SO CEREBUS SAID "HAMMER. FRED HAMMER."

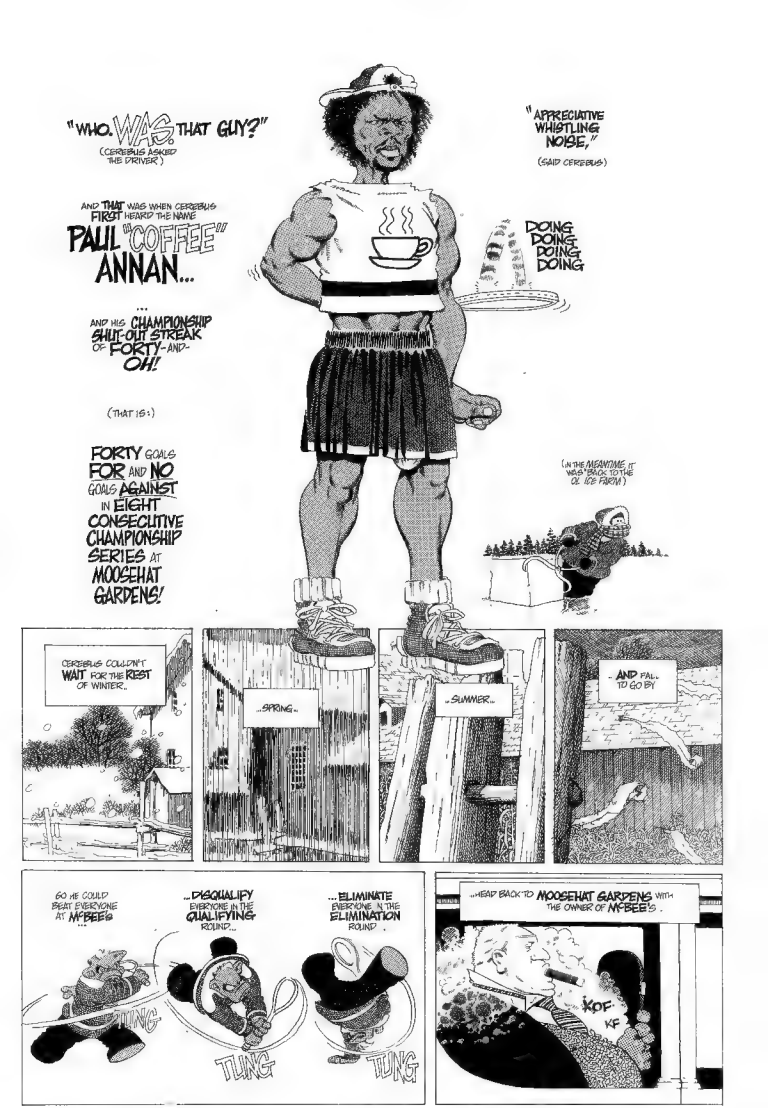
AND THEY CAME BACK IN A COUPLE OF DAYS WITH A SWEATER THAT HAD A HAMMER PAINTED ON THE FRONT AND "HAMMER" LETTERED ON THE BACK.

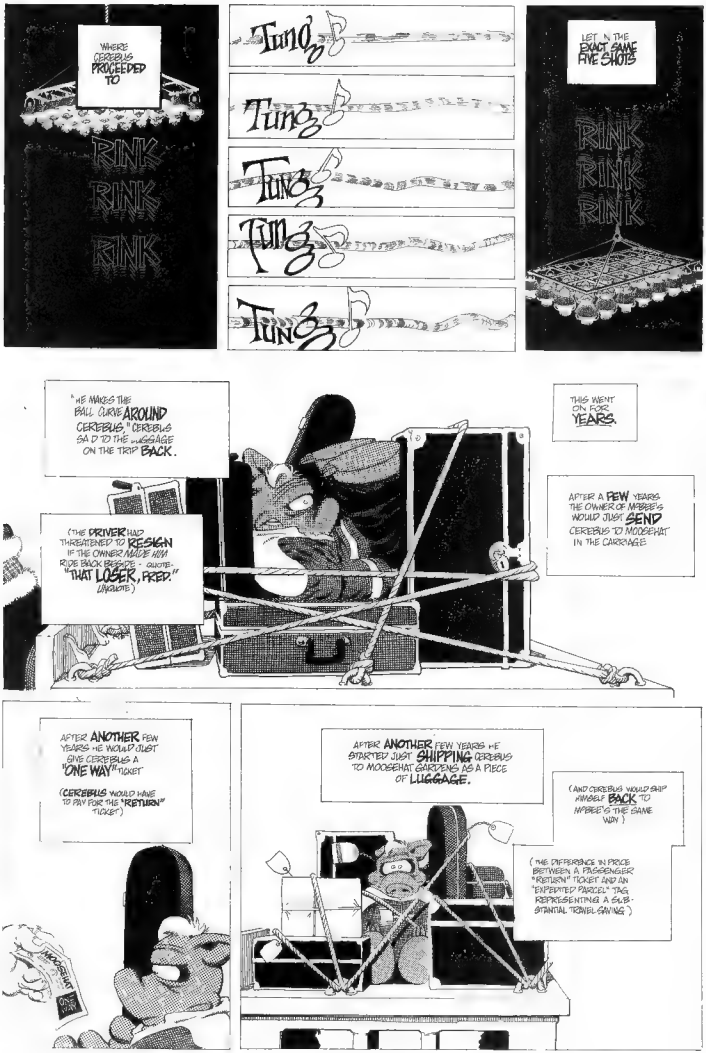
SO CEREBUS WORE HIS NEW SWEATER...

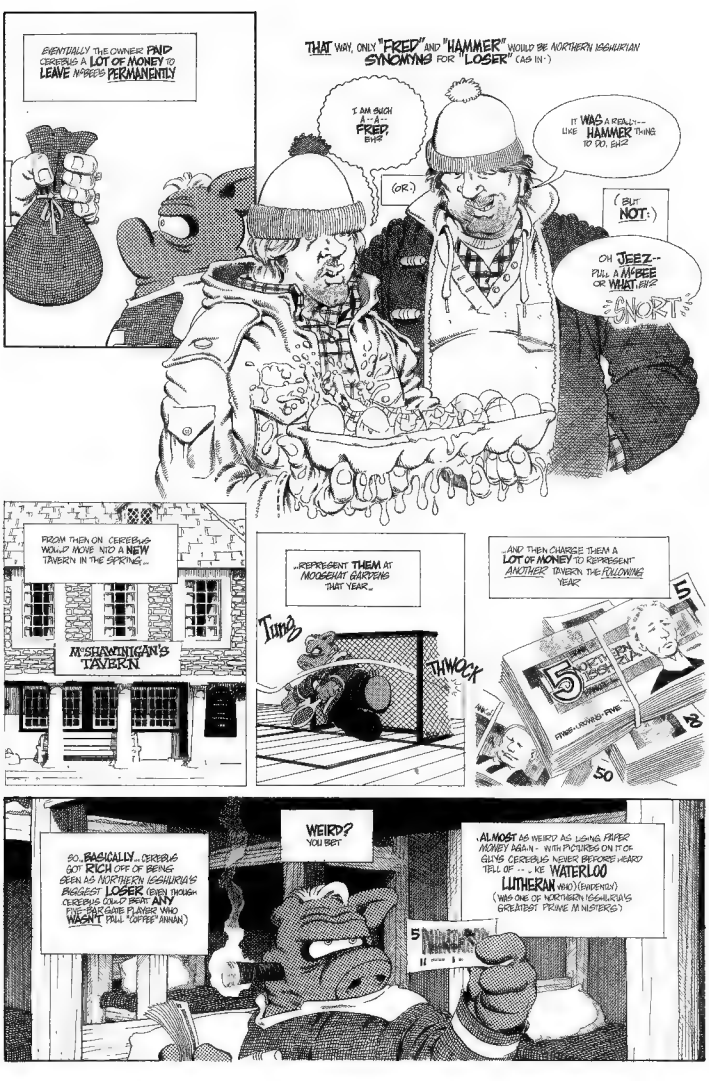



...AT THE REGIONAL ELIMINATION ROUND...
TUNG!
(WHERE CERBERUS ELIMINATED EVERYONE ELSE)
THWOK
SOON EVERYONE WAS SAYING:
"FRED SHOULD BE GOING OUT ON THE ROAD SOON."
(THEY MADE IT SOUND LIKE A GOOD THING — SO CERBERUS STARTED LOOKING FORWARD TO IT)
KF
KF
A DAY OR SO LATER, SURE ENOUGH, CERBERUS WAS IN A CARRIAGE WITH THE OWNER OF McBEE'S RACING TOWARD THE LEGENDARY FIVE-BAR GATE CAPITAL OF ESTARCION: MOOSEHAT!
AND ITS EQUALLY LEGENDARY FIVE-BAR GATE "SHRINE": MOOSEHAT GARDENS!
TONIGHT: PAUL "COFFE" VS FRED HAMNER
(SO LEGENDARY WAS MOOSEHAT GARDENS THAT CERBERUS WAS PROUD THAT THEY MISSPELT HIS NAME ON THE MARQUEE!)
RINK
RINK
RINK
RINK
INSIDE THEY WERE HAULING HUGE RACKS OF OIL LAMPS UP TO THE RAFTERS!


THAT MADE IT SO SUPER BRIGHT ON THE COURT THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE A SINGLE PERSON IN THE CROWD.
HAMMER
EXCEPT IN "THE PEN"... (THE PLACE AT THE BACK OF THE COURT WHERE --USUALLY-- OTHER PLAYERS SIT WHILE AWAITING THE RESULT OF ANOTHER QUALIFYING OR ELIMINATION GAME)
...A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRL.
Tung
Tung
Tung
Tung
Tung
FIVE SHOTS
FIVE GOALS
BAP
TUNG
AND A GAME LATER
CEREBUS' SEASON WAS OVER.
BIP
BIP
BAP
BIP
RINK
RINK
RINK
RINK
THEY WERE HAULING THE HUGE RACKS OF OIL LAMPS DOWN FROM THE RAFTERS.
AND, WE WERE ON OUR WAY BACK TO McBEE'S IN THE CARRIAGE.
(ACTUALLY ONLY THE OWNER WAS IN THE CARRIAGE.) (HE TOLD CEREBUS TO RIDE ON TOP WITH THE DRIVER ON THE WAY BACK.)


"WHO WAS THAT GUY?"
(CEREBELUS ASKED THE DRIVER)
AND THAT WAS WHEN CEREBELUS FIRST HEARD THE NAME
PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN...
...
AND HIS CHAMPIONSHIP SHUT-OUT STREAK OF FORTY-AND-OH!
(THAT IS:)
FORTY GOALS FOR AND NO GOALS AGAINST IN EIGHT CONSECUTIVE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES AT MOOSEHAT GARDENS!
"APPRECIATIVE WHISTLING NOISE,"
(SAID CEREBELUS)
DOING DOING DOING DOING
(IN THE MEANTIME, IT WAS BACK TO THE OL' ICE FARM.)
CEREBELUS COULDN'T WAIT FOR THE REST OF WINTER...
...SPRING...
...SUMMER...
...AND FALL TO GO BY
SO HE COULD BEAT EVERYONE AT MCBEE'S...
...DISQUALIFY EVERYONE IN THE QUALIFYING ROUND...
...ELIMINATE EVERYONE IN THE ELIMINATION ROUND.
TING
TING
TING
...HEAD BACK TO MOOSEHAT GARDENS WITH THE OWNER OF MCBEE'S.
KOF
KF


WHERE CEREBUS PROCEEDED TO
RINK
RINK
RINK
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
LET 'N THE EXACT SAME FIVE SHOTS
RINK
RINK
RINK
HE MAKES THE BALL CURVE AROUND CEREBUS," CEREBUS SA D TO THE LUGGAGE ON THE TRIP BACK.
(THE DRIVER HAD THREATENED TO RESIGN IF THE OWNER MADE HIM RIDE BACK BESIDE "QUOTE-"THAT LOSER, FRED." UNQUOTE)
THIS WENT ON FOR YEARS.
AFTER A FEW YEARS THE OWNER OF MOOSE'S WOULD JUST SEND CEREBUS TO MOOSEHAT IN THE CARRIAGE
AFTER ANOTHER FEW YEARS HE WOULD JUST GIVE CEREBUS A "ONE WAY" TICKET
(CEREBUS WOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR THE "RETURN" TICKET)
MOOSEHAT
ONE WAY
AFTER ANOTHER FEW YEARS HE STARTED JUST SHIPPING CEREBUS TO MOOSEHAT GARDENS AS A PIECE OF LUGGAGE.
(AND CEREBUS WOULD SHIP HIMSELF BACK TO MOOSE'S THE SAME WAY)
(THE DIFFERENCE IN PRICE BETWEEN A PASSENGER "RETURN" TICKET AND AN "EXPEDITED PARCEL" TAG, REPRESENTING A SUBSTANTIAL TRAVEL-SAVING)

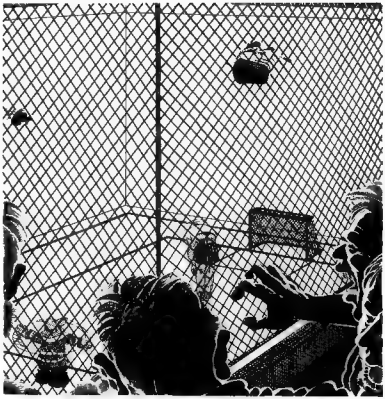

EVENTUALLY THE OWNER FIND CERBERUS A LOT OF MONEY TO LEAVE N'BEDS PERMANENTLY
THAT WAY, ONLY "FRED" AND "HAMMER" WOULD BE NORTHERN YAGHURIAN SYNONYMS FOR "LOSER" (CAS IN:)
I AM SUCH A--A-- FRED, EH?!?
(OR:)
IT WAS A REAL!-- LIKE HAMMER THING TO DO, EH?
(BUT NOT:)
OH JEEZ-- PULL A MCBEE OR WHAT, EH?!?
SNORT
FROM THEN ON, CERBERUS WOULD MOVE INTO A NEW TAVERN IN THE SPRING...
MCSHAWNIGAN'S TAVERN
...REPRESENT THEM AT MODERATE BARTERS THAT YEAR...
TUMB
THWOCK
...AND THEN CHARGE THEM A LOT OF MONEY TO REPRESENT ANOTHER TAVERN THE FOLLOWING YEAR
5
18
50
SO...BASICALLY... CERBERUS GOT RICH OFF OF BEING BEEN AS NORTHERN YAGHURIA'S BIGGEST LOSER (EVEN THOUGH CERBERUS COULD BEAT ANY FIVE-BALGAME FLAMBE WHO WASN'T PULL "COFFEE" ANNAN)
WEIRD? YOU BET
ALMOST AS WEIRD AS USING PAPER MONEY AGAIN - WITH PICTURES ON IT OF GUNS CERBERUS NEVER BEFORE HEARD TELL OF - - - KE WATERLOO LUTHERAN WHO (EVIDENTLY) (WAS ONE OF NORTHERN YAGHURIA'S GREATEST PRIME MINISTERS)
5

THINGS NEVER CHANGED MUCH AT MOOSEHAT GARDENS.
THE BEAUTIFUL AND NOW NOT-SO-YOUNG GIRL (PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN'S WIFE) (AS IT TURNED OUT) HAD A BABY.
OVER THE COURSE OF A NUMBER OF FIVE-BAR GATE SEASONS, THE BABY...
...PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN JUNIOR...
GROWN UP.
AND THEN (CONFIDING) HE JUST UP AND LEFT FOR GOOD.
(BECAME GAID BECAUSE OF HIS NICKNAME: PAUL "CAFE AU LAIT" ANNAN) (BUT, WAD KNOWS?)
OH! AND CERBERUS FINALLY BROKE PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN'S SHUT-OUT STREAK AT
119 AND OH
(ON A FLUKE GOAL WHEN THE STRING ON CERBERUS' RACKET BROKE IN MID SHOT)
TING SPING
WHICH MADE THE BALL DIPSY DOODLE
JUST LIKE A PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN SHOT!)
THWOK
THEN THERE WAS THE YEAR PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN BROKE HIS ANKLE IN A QUALIFYING MATCH
WHICH MEANT THAT CERBERUS GOT TO BE CHAMPION THAT YEAR BY BEATING SOME NO-NAME GUY...
...AND "FRED HAMMER" FINALLY GOT HIS NAME ON THE JAKIRBEE CUP!

WHICH MEANT... THAT YEAR IT WAS CERBERUS (INSTEAD OF MR. AND MRS. PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN) WHO GOT TO GO "ON TOUR" ALL ACROSS NORTHERN ESMURIA...
BEATING LOTS OF NO-NAME GUYS IN EXHIBITION GAMES...
AND HAVING SEX WITH REALLY, REALLY BEAUTIFUL
(AND REALLY, REALLY DUMB)
YOUNG GIRLS WHO WANTED TO BE "MRS. JAKIRBEE CUP CHAMPION"
TUNG
FLEM FLOW
BEAVER CLEFT
WATCHATOOCHAHIMA JUNCTION
LOON FALLS
DIKE'S FERRY
KICKING HORSE PASSES
CERBERUS TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO THEM THAT THE ONLY REASON CERBERUS WAS THE CHAMPION WAS BECAUSE PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN BROKE HIS ANKLE THAT YEAR.
THEY WOULDN'T TELL "FREE" THAT HE WAS JUST BEING MODEST AND THEY WERE SURE "FREE" WOULD BE THE REIGNING CHAMPION FOR
"LIKE"
"EVER."
SO "FREE" LEARNED TO JUST (YOU KNOW)
SHUT UP AND... WELL (YOU KNOW)
KA DONK KA DONK KA DONK
HUNH HUNH HUNH
THA BANG THA BANG THA BANG
THE NEXT YEAR PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN
TUNG
BEAT CERBERUS AGAIN. SO (FORTUNATELY) EVERYTHING WENT BACK TO NORMAL.

WHICH (HEH-HEH) **FINALLY** BRINGS CEREBUS TO THE **ANSWER** TO THE QUESTION "WHAT DOES CEREBUS CONSIDER TO BE THE **MOST EXCITING MOMENT** IN CEREBUS' LIFE?" **THAT** WOULD **HAVE** TO BE THE **LAST** FIVE BAR GATE MATCH BETWEEN CEREBUS AND PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN.

CEREBUS KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE THINKING: "**BUT**- WHAT ABOUT ALL OF THE GREAT BATTLES CEREBUS WAS IN? WHAT ABOUT PETROU RIDGE AND ALL THE REST? SEE THE THING ABOUT AN ACTUAL **BATTLE** IS THAT YOU CAN'T **AFFORD** TO BE EXCITED! GETTING **EXCITED** IN A BATTLE IS A GOOD WAY TO GET **DEAD**. IN A **BATTLE** YOU MAKE A LOT OF *DECISIONS* IN A *HURRY*. TIME SEEMS TO SLOW DOWN **AND** SPEED UP. A BATTLE THAT ONLY LASTS UNTIL MORNING WILL **SEEM** FIVE DAYS LONG... BUT WHEN IT'S **OVER**, AND YOU STRING TOGETHER EVERYTHING YOU REMEMBER, YOU ONLY REMEMBER A TOTAL OF FIVE OR TEN **MINUTES**: WHAT HAPPENED THE **REST** OF THE MORNING--THAT SEEMED--AT THE *TIME*--FIVE DAYS--LONG?-- YOU HAVE NO IDEA, AND YOU REALLY HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE TO FIGURE IT **OUT**, BECAUSE THE NEXT THING YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE "**DEAD GUYS** AND **DYING GUYS**" PART OF *LATER* THE *BATTLE*. YOU KNOW- SEEING GUYS WITH THEIR GUTS SPILLED OUT OR HALF THEIR HEAD GONE GUYS YOU SAW EATING BREAKFAST *JUST* BEFORE THE GUN CAME UP, OR- EVEN WORSE--GUYS WHO ARE IN THAT KIND OF SHAPE AND ARE STILL **ALIVE** AND SCREAMING AND-- WELL, THERE'S PROBABLY A **WORD** FOR HOW THAT MAKES YOU **FEEL** BUT--**TRUST** CEREBUS--"EXCITED" ISN'T **IT**.



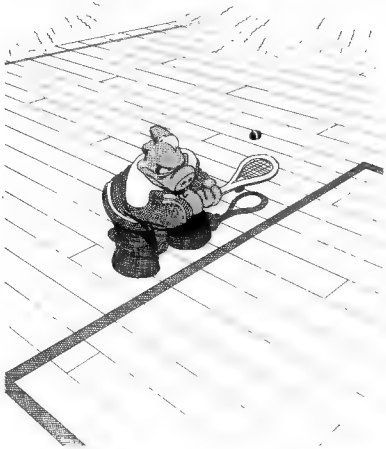
AND **THAT'S** THE BIG DIFFERENCE WITH **PRO-FESSIONAL** FIVE-BAR-GATE-- **NOBODY** GETS **KILLED** NO MATTER *HOW* BAD THEY **STINK** AT IT. AND THERE'S A **CROWD** (WHOSE **ONLY** JOB IT IS TO YELL REALLY LOUD AND CLAP AND **BOOH** AT AND DOWN AND GET THE PLAYERS EXCITED! (WHICH THEY DO NO MATTER **WHAT** THE PLAYERS **SAY** ABOUT "NOT NOTICING THE CROWD"-- PICTURE TRYING TO DO **ANYTHING** WITH TWO HUNDRED GUYS YELLING AT YOU-- AND PICTURE JUST IGNORING THEM. **HOW** ARE YOU GOING TO IGNORE EVEN **FIVE** GUYS YELLING AT YOU, --ESPECIALLY WHEN WHAT THEY'RE YELLING IS "**YOU STINK, HAMMER!**" OR "**BLOW ME, HAMMER!**"? *THAT'S JUST BULL-SHIT.*) (PARDON CEREBUS'S FRENCH.)

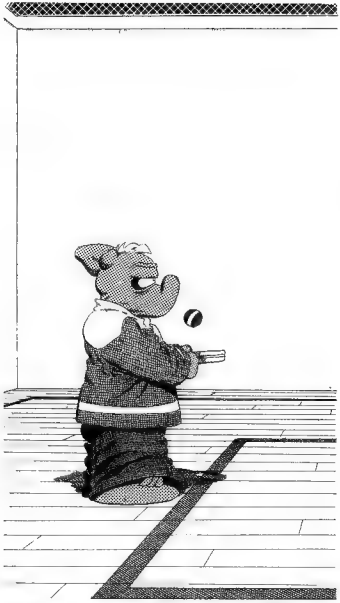
SO **ANYWAY**- THE **LAST** FIVE-BAR-GATE MATCH BETWEEN PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN AND "FRIED HAMMER" AT MOOSEHAT GARDENS. THE LIFETIME RECORD BETWEEN THE TWO OF US STOOD AT ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE-AND-ONE FOR PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN. A HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE GOALS **FOR** AND ONE GOAL **AGAINST**. SO CEREBUS DID WHAT HE **ALWAYS** DID AFTER THE FIRST FEW SEASONS. WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS CEREBUS WAS **NEVER** GOING TO **BEAT** PAUL, "COFFEE" ANNAN)

CEREBUS **TEASED** THE CROWD.

(WHICH WAS ABOUT AS DIFFICULT AS TEASING A CHAINED UP WATCH-DOG) (WHICH IS WHAT A FIVE BAR-GATE CROWD *MOST* RESEMBLES IN *INTELLIGENCE* AND *SELF-EXPRESSION*.) CEREBUS STOOD AT THE *SHOT-LINE*, BOUNCING THE BALL ON HIS RACKET AND THEN *WANDERED OVER* (AS IF HE WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT) WHILE THE BIG, DUMB "CHAINED UP" WATCHDOG CHANTED "**COFF-EE**" "**COFF-EE**" "**COFF-EE**" "**COFF-EE**"

THE CHANTING GETTING **LOUDER** AND **LOUDER** AND **LOUDER**!





AND THEN CERBERUS WOULD JUST... **STRAIGHTEN UP** AS IF HE HAD CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT SHOOTING... AND THE CROWD WOULD GO **ABSOLUTELY BERZERK**: "@%!☆YOU, HAMMER!" "@%!☆ING **SHOOT!** YOU @%!☆ING ASS@%!☆!" (OR--THAT IS--) "@%! **HOLE!**"

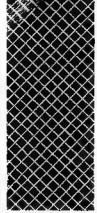
(THAT 'CHAINED UP WATCHERS' THING -- SEE: CERBERUS DID THIS **EVERY YEAR** ON HIS FIRST SHOT. SO EVERYBODY **KNEW** CERBERUS WAS GOING TO DO IT AND **STILL**, EVERY YEAR, THE **CROWD** WENT ABSOLUTELY BERZERK WHEN CERBERUS STRAIGHTENED UP.) **WHY** DID CERBERUS **DO** IT? BASICALLY TO GET THE CROWD EVEN MORE WORKED UP SO THAT THE FLOORBOARDS OF MOOSEHAT GARDENS STARTED TO SHAKE AND THE ROARING NOISE WOULD MAKE CERBERUS' SCALP START TO TINGLE AND GET THE BELLS RINGING IN CERBERUS' GOOD EAR.)

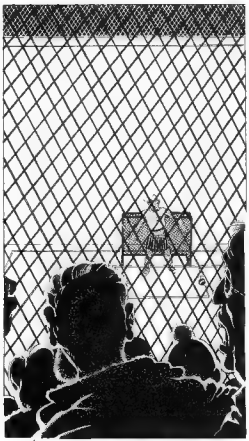
AND THEN CERBERUS WOULD DO SOMETHING **ELSE** BESIDES SHOOTING (IT DIDN'T MATTER **WHAT** AS LONG AS IT WASN'T A **SHOT**) AND THAT WOULD **REALLY** DRIVE THE CROWD **CRAZY**

ANYWAY, IN THAT **LAST** GAME, WHAT CERBERUS DID WAS TO TAKE A COUPLE OF STEPS TO HIS **RIGHT** AND (BOY) DID **THAT** DRIVE THE CROWD INSANE: "COF-**FEE**! COF-**FEE**!"

(AND) "HAMMER! STICKER! SHOOT THE **BALL**!" "**YOU** #@%!☆ING @%!☆ING @%!☆ING"

(SEE: KNOWING THAT CERBERUS COULDN'T POSSIBLY BEAT PAUL "COF-FEE" ANNAN, CERBERUS SPENT HIS TIME INSTEAD) GETTING THE CROWD MORE AND MORE WORKED UP -- LOUDER AND LOUDER AND LOUDER -- TRYING TO TIME IT JUST RIGHT SO THAT JUST WHEN THE CROWD WAS AS WORKED UP AND AS LOUD AS THEY COULD **GET**





CERBERUS TIMED IT JUST **PERFECTLY** ON THAT FIRST SHOT WHEN PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN MADE THE SAVE AND CERBERUS **DOVE** FOR THE REBOUND AND **MISSED** IT, THE CROWD BROKE INTO A

ROAR

THAT ACTUALLY **BOUNCED** CERBERUS **UP** OFF OF THE FLOORBOARDS A FRACTION OF AN INCH! -- (**BOUNCE** BOUNCE) -- MOOSEHAT GARDENS WAS SHAKING SO HARD

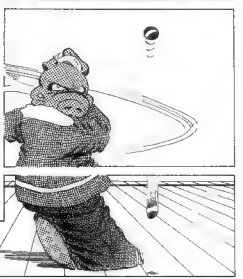
SO (OF COURSE) CERBERUS WANTED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN AGAIN ON THE **SECOND** SHOT.....

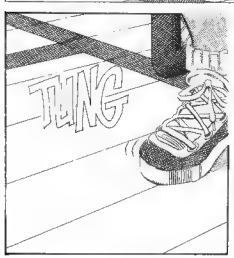
SO **THIS** TIME, CERBERUS PUTS HIS RACKET DOWN AND CHECKS THE STITCHING ALONG THE BOTTOM OF HIS SWEATER... **INTENTLY**. (LIKE "WHERE THE STITCHING THREW CERBERUS OFF"

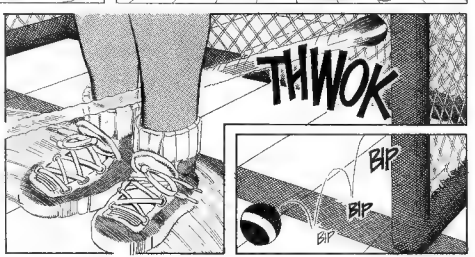
(SOMEBODY IN THE CROWD YELLED "IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR YOUR **DICK** MANNER, YOU BETTER TRY A **MAGNIFYING GLASS**") (WHICH CERBERUS THOUGHT WAS PRETTY FUNNY)

AND SOON, THEY WERE RIGHT BACK UP AT THEIR **PEAK VOLUME** AND THE FLOORBOARDS WERE JUST SHAKING LIKE CRAZY AND CERBERUS SCALP WAS TINGLING

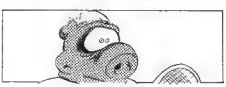
AND



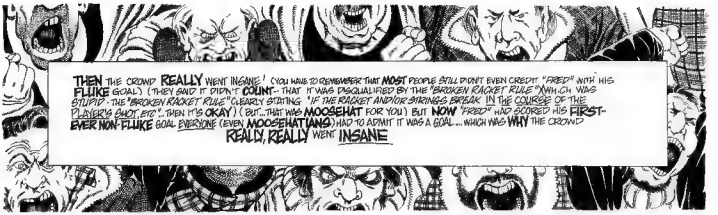




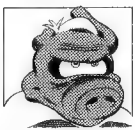
IT WENT *IN!*

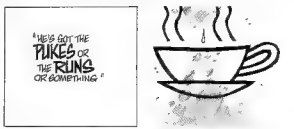


IT WENT *RIGHT IN!*


THEN THE CROWD REALLY WENT INSANE! (YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT MOST PEOPLE STILL DIDN'T EVEN CREDIT "FRED" WITH HIS FLUKE GOAL) (THEY SAID IT DIDN'T COUNT - THAT IT WAS DISQUALIFIED BY THE "BROKEN RACKET RULE." WHICH WAS STUPID - THE "BROKEN RACKET RULE" CLEARLY STATING "IF THE RACKET AND/OR STRINGS BREAK IN THE COURSE OF THE PLAYER'S SHOT, ETC"... THEN IT'S OKAY) (BUT...THAT WAS MOOSEHAT FOR YOU) BUT NOW "FRED" HAD SCORED HIS FIRST-EVER NON-FLUKE GOAL (EVERYONE (EVEN MOOSEHATIANS) HAD TO ADMIT IT WAS A GOAL... WHICH WAS WHY THE CROWD REALLY, REALLY WENT INSANE

CERBERUS NOTICED THAT PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN WAS SWEATING LIKE A STUCK PIG (WHICH CERBERUS HAD NEVER SEEN PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN DO (NOT EVEN - YOU KNOW - A SHINY FOREHEAD)





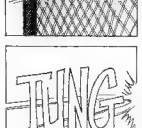
THE NOISE OF THE CROWD POUNDING IN CERBERUS' GOOD EAR, CERBERUS HAD TO ASK HIMSELF -- "WAS CERBERUS REALLY GOING TO "TAKE ADVANTAGE" OF A... WEAKENED, SICK... PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN?"

THE CROWD NOISE SWELLING LOUDER AND LOUDER... SEEMED... SUDDENLY... FAR, FAR AWAY AND THERE... IN THE MIDDLE OF MOOSE HAT GARDENS, THE ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION CAME TO CERBERUS

"YOU BET YOUR ASS HE WAS!"

"TOP SHELF!" (TWO-PER-THREE)

"CORNER: RACKET SIDE!" (THREE-PER-FOUR)



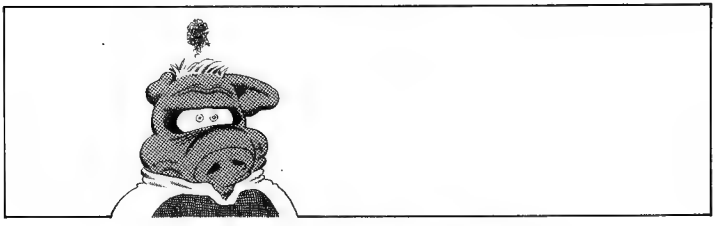
"FIVE-HOLE! (AGAIN!)" (FOUR-PER-FIVE)

NOW, ALL CERBERUS HAD TO DO WAS SOMETHING HE HAD NEVER MANAGED BEFORE: HE HAD TO STOP - NOT ONE BUT TWO... PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN DIPSY-DOODLE SHOTS

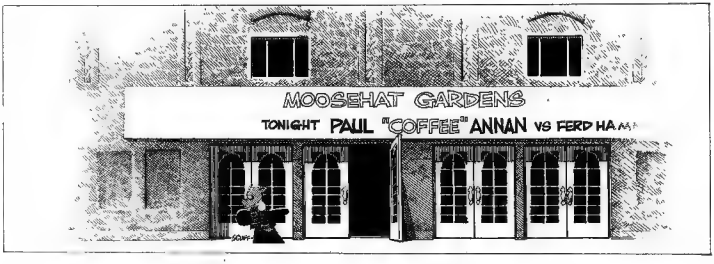
CERBERUS WAITED FOR THE REFEREE TO SIGNAL THE GOALIE-SHOOTER CHANGE
BUT THE REF WAS JUST STARING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE NET...
WHERE PAUL 'COFFEE' ANNAN HAD JUST...
('OOOOOOOH,' WENT THE CROWD)
...COLLAPSED!
THE CROWD FELL SILENT AS MR. VAN HELLEMOND HURRIED ONTO THE COURT...
LAURA'S CONCORD SWEETS & SWINE
(WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK THAT MOOSEHAT'S CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER ALSO RAN THE MAPLE SUGAR CANDY AND BACK-BACON-ON-A-STICK CONCESSION AT MOOSEHAT GARDENS!)
... AND THEN HURRIED OVER TO EXAMINE PAUL 'COFFEE' ANNAN.
APART FROM MR. VAN HELLEMOND'S
"MM."
"MM-MM"
"MMHM"
YOU COULD HEAR A PIN DROP
YOU DROPPED YOUR PIN
HEH-HEH, SILLY!

FINALLY, MR VAN HELLEMOND BUCKED UP AND SAID
"PAUL."
"COFFEE."
"ANNAN."
AND THEN HE PAUSED.. FOR A SECOND... OR TWO..
(SEE-- NOT ONLY WAS HE NOOSEBURT'S CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AND PART OWNER OF LAURA CONCORD SWEETS & SWINE, HE WAS ALSO THE MANAGER/DIRECTOR OF THE VAN HELLEMOND JACK-A-DANDY PLAYERS AT THE NORTHERN LEGURIA NATIONAL THEATRE IN NOOSEBURT.) SO HE REALLY KNEW HOW TO - YOU KNOW- "MILK" A GOOD LINE FOR ALL IT WAS WORTH.)
"..IS.. DEAD."
(.., HE CONTINUED..)
LAURA CONCORD SWEET & SWINE
"BOOHOOHOO" WENT MOST OF THE CROWD
"SHRIEEK" WENT THE NO-LONGER BEAUTIFUL BUT (SHOPPED-NEW)-STILL-SORT OF-ATTRACTIVE LADY WHO WAS PAUL "COFFEE" ANNAN'S ...er... OLD LADY
"COFF-EE COFF-EE"
WENT THE CHANGED UP WATCHERS PART OF THE CROWD (MASTERS OF IMPROVISATION THOSE FELLOWS)
"FURTHER..."
CONTINUED MR. VAN HELLEMOND (PAUSING TO GIVE THE CROWD A CHANCE TO QUIET DOWN)
"FURTHER..."
HE REPEATED... ...PAUSING AGAIN (THIS TIME FOR THE DRAMATIC EFFECT) (SINCE THE CROWD WAS ALREADY QUIET BY THEN)
"FURTHER... I HAVE DETERMINED THAT THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS..."
(TWO)
(THREE)
(FOUR)
"@#!★ING HAMMER!"
SOMEONE IN THE CROWD YELLED
"YEAH" YELLED SOMEONE ELSE (WHO ALSO HEARD MR. VAN HELLEMOND'S DRAMATIC EFFECT FOR A REQUEST FOR A SECOND OPINION)
"@#!★ING HAMMER KILLED HIM!"
LAURA
"OLD..."
"...AGE." SAID MR. VAN HELLEMOND (FINALLY)

AS CEREBUS FELT THE WEIGHT OF **TWO HUNDRED PAIRS OF EYES** TURNING SLOWLY IN HIS DIRECTION, ALL HE COULD DO WAS STAND THERE WISHING THAT HIS HAIR AND HIS TEETH WOULD FALL OUT OR... THAT HE WOULD SUDDENLY GROW A HUNDRED MORE WRINKLES OR...SOME **LIVER SPOTS**.....OR.....**SOMETHING**..... SO THAT HE DIDN'T FEEL LIKE SUCH A... A..... **CHEATER!**



EVEN AS CEREBUS SHUFFLED OUT OF *MOOSEHAT GARDENS* FOR THE *LAST TIME* -- (**KNOWING**: HE COULD **NEVER** PLAY *FINE-BAR GATE* AGAIN.) (A **CHORUS** OF **BOO'S** AND **CATCALLS** RINGING IN HIS EARS).....EVEN AS CEREBUS STARTED TO "*BLANK OUT*" AGAIN.....



CEREBUS REALIZED THAT HE HAD BEEN GOING ABOUT THIS THE *WRONG WAY*..... REALIZED THAT THE *BEST WAY* TO GET HIMSELF *KILLED* WAS TO HEAD BACK DOWN *SOUTH*.....

AND GET THE **CIRINISTS** TO DO THE JOB

...continued from cover

*The "ignominious admission" was there partly for your benefit, Gary, and partly for the benefit of any self-publishers who felt profoundly embittered about their lives being destroyed by Dave Sim and his evil machinations. I assumed that either you would read the quote or someone would point it out to you and you would make use of it somewhere to, metaphorically, beat me over the head. Which you did. That was the "means". The "end" that I had in mind was to give any disenchanted self-publishers a vehicle—*the Comics Journal*—to likewise beat me over the head for having ruined their lives. My assumption being that if such self-publishers existed they would not be apt to vent at me* directly, *but might very well be desirous of an outlet where they could vent at me* indirectly. *Since I was rather underhandedly endeavouring to make use of you without your knowledge, I thought the least I could do was to offer you a clue as to what I was doing. I really thought you'd smell a rat with the reference to "hundreds" of lives ruined and—if not—then the "thousands" would have clued you in to the hyperbolic extremism that was afoot. C'mon, Gary. Barely a hundred (singular) self-publishers* in toto *took part in the Spirits stops and I would be surprised if a thousand (singular) self-publishers have existed in the history of the medium.*

Anyway, I would assume—given your not having published an article or series of articles on "How Dave Sim Ruined My Life"—that either no one wrote to you about it or the few who did expressed a level of outrage insufficient for the purposes of a "hard-hitting exposé". Right?

To me, that indicates that self-publishing was—and is—a positive experience for a creator. Hell on earth, to be sure, but a Hell that few of them regret: and for those few who are lucky enough to find a large enough audience to sustain them, a very rewarding livelihood. And even some of those who didn't "make the grade" have continued to produce their work and finish their stories purely for their own satisfaction (Jason Trimmer with Chronic Apathy, *as an example) or continue to produce their work with an eye on—ultimately, some day—self-publishing the finished story as a trade paperback or series of trade paperbacks (Scott Berwanger with* Anubis).

If I was more-than-a-little "over the top with enthusiasm" about self-publishing (and I freely admit that I, indeed, was) it was only *because I was investigating whether your* own *approach with* The Comics Journal *was "exportable". You know: the way that you frontload all of the* Journal's *"Best of the 20th Century" and "Top 100" lists with Fantagraphics creators: "Wow! Can you* believe *it? It turns out that Gilbert and Jaime and Chris and Dan are the* ABSOLUTE BEST CREATORS IN THE UNIVERSE AGAIN!!" *with suitably vague allusions as to how the conclusion was arrived at by some more objective and irrefutable means than the fact that the only people who were consulted were either Fantagraphics employees or "experts" hand-picked for their proven willingness to publicly "toe" the Fantagraphics party line.*

"How does Gary get away *with that?" I wondered, followed by: "I wonder if I can get away with it?"*

So I chose, basically, to do the same thing: giving the back of Cerebus *over to the* Cerebus Preview *and giving the Note from the President on the inside front cover over to a breathless self-publisher news bulletin format: "Wow! Another brilliant comic came in today and—can you beat that, Ladies and Gentlemen?* —It's Self-Published!"

At the end of the day, I think we both have had about the same amount of success with the approach. Not only can neither of us make *either a Fantagraphics or self-published comic book sell [as you admitted to me yourself: you couldn't give away copies of (insert name of cartoonist whose work we both know and for whom we both have a very high regard) and—sorry, Jeff, sorry, Terry—*Bone *and* Strangers in Paradise *would not have been my first choice for self-publishing success if I had* anything at all *to do with who "got the brass ring"] neither of us has the slightest idea of how to make a book sell* better *or why one book "catches fire" and another one doesn't.*

For some inexplicable reason there is a ceiling on what any comic book or graphic novel will sell. Art spiegelman can do a full-page, full colour *comic strip in the* New Yorker *(I mean, the* New *Bloody* Yorker, *fer cryin' out loud) plugging* David Boring *and that still is not going to propel Dan Clowes onto the New York Times bestseller list. And (I hope you would agree) that is neither* Dan's *failure, nor* yours, *nor* spiegelman's, *nor the* New Yorker's. *It is just a fact of comic-book publishing—and comic-book self-publishing.*

*(I've offered Gary unlimited space in these pages for an ongoing debate about whatever-it-is he wants to debate with me. I originally intended to use the 'Dialogue: From Hell" format that I used with Alan Moore but it's been almost a month since I faxed the above to Gary. I have heard nary a word since and—unfortunately—it's time to fill the back of the book. I'll run our next exchange of views when I get something from him). (Or—if you prefer—***IT'S THE NO-HOLDS-BARRED, COMIC-BOOK WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT INTELLECTUAL SMACKDOWN OF THE MILLENNIUM: GARY (I FIND YOUR PSEUDO-REASONING EGREGIOUS IN THE EXTREME) GROTH VERSUS DAVE (YOUR TACIT 'NEED' FOR AFFIRMATION IMPLIES, TO ME, A SELF-UNDERMINING LACK OF CONVICTION) SIM IN THE BATTLE TO THE COMIC-BOOK PHILOSOPHICAL DEATH THAT WILL SETTLE ONCE AND FOR ALL WHO IS THE *REAL* "KING OF THE HYPERBOLIC RANCOUR RING"! SNIDE INNUENDO! WITHERING INVECTIVE! GRANDILOQUENT CHARACTER ASSASSINATION! IT'S ALL HERE! YOU DARE NOT MISS***—and, uh, so on.)*

post game

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

I am often asked how much of *Cerebus* is planned and how much is improvised, so I thought I would try to document a given issue (*this* issue) to try to indicate what the balance tends to be (although, of course, that will vary depending on the issue in question).

To begin with, each issue has a function in its given part of the overall *Cerebus* storyline. To use a recent example, there was the "Jaka and Cerebus trapped in a tent on the side of a mountain" issue which was a key part of *Going Home* and which shrunk from its intended length of two or two-and-a-half issues (ten years ago) to one-and-a-half issues (three years ago) to one issue (when the Africa sequence ran a little long). Basically, I excised the entire sequence of *how* they got to the tent on the side of the mountain and handled the only element that the overall storyline required—the hailstorm that ruins Jaka's complexion—as a few panels of flashback. Does that mean that there is a wonderful ten pages of script of how they got to the tent that I jettisoned? No, it was just never written because it wasn't required. I think that disappoints a certain number of *non*-writers and causes them to think "you're just making it up as you go along."

Well, yes and no.

I do not have every line of dialogue for the last six hundred pages letter-perfect in my head. I freely admit it, as I am reasonably certain *any* creator of extended serialised fiction would freely admit. I know what it is that *needs* to happen in each issue. When I get to each issue, I develop what *needs* to happen, page by page, panel by panel, word balloon by word balloon, shaping and "fitting" the central ideas that *need* to be conveyed to move you, the reader, from the last part of the story to the next part of the story.

For about ten years, this issue was known to me only as "one of the three or four issues which would constitute a bridge between *Going Home* and *Latter Days"*—a bridge which got reduced to two issues once I started mapping out the second half of *Going Home.* Two self-contained and (I hope) funny issues along the lines of issue 51. Structurally, in terms of its function within the overall *Cerebus* storyline, the net effect of issue 267 was to be "a few decades went by". Mindful that this might be too jarring a transition for the average reader, I floated a trial balloon some years ago in *Guys* where Cerebus grouses inwardly about Bear, a year or so passes between panels and in the *subsequent* panel he is still grousing inwardly about Bear. Like most things it garnered little reaction and what reaction there was expressed approval. It was a neat surprise. No one expressed outrage at being "cheated" out of a year of Cerebus' life. *Decades* might (yet) prove to be another matter, but it seemed safe to proceed without manufacturing elaborate rationalizations and plotting tricks to convey "a few decades went by," that is, to "sneak it past" you, the reader.

When—over the course of those ten years—I would mentally "visit" the issue up ahead, I would ask myself, "*how* can several decades go by—let's say twenty years or (even better) *thirty* years go by—in such a way that Cerebus scarcely notices?" I checked my own life for possibilities. There was *feminism,* of course (can it really be thirty years since Norman Mailer wondered—in *Prisoner of Sex*—if feminism was an actual societal trend or just an early seventies fad?). But I had about done feminism to death.

The Toronto Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup in 1967 and their thirty-year (and counting) drought since then.

I liked the idea right away. A lot has happened in my life (to say the least) since 1967, but—in a real sense—the Leafs not so much as making it to the Stanley Cup *finals* since 1967 looms large as autobiographical backdrop. Each October—for *thirty-plus years*—bright with the optimism of a brand-new season, I (and several million other self-deluding Canadian schmucks) have faithfully wondered, "Is *this* the year?" And every year we have clung to that same false hope as the Leafs a) didn't make the playoffs b) exited in the first round or c) advanced to the second or third round only to d) expire before our disbelieving eyes.

And—in a (likewise) very real sense—to all Leaf fans in my age group, it seems like just *yesterday* (rather than *thirty-four years ago*) that Leaf captain George Armstrong stepped over the centre red line and scored the empty net goal that sealed the last Cup victory, four games to two over the (booooo) Habs.

So I figured that I would have Cerebus go through a similar "drought" as a professional whatever-it was-I-was-going-to-call-that-stupid-tennis-racket-game-that-I-invented-when-I-was-eleven player. (Five Bar Gate, ultimately, came from a George Harrison line in *A Hard Day's Night).*

That was really all that I needed—the "losing streak" and "three decades go by" to have confidence that twenty pages could be developed around those two ideas and I didn't "visit" that issue much at all after that. On one of my rare subsequent visits, the (flash) mental image of the wife of Cerebus' arch-rival giving birth to a baby who grows up into young adulthood in the next panel and then leaves home for good in the subsequent panel represented my *last* visit until it actually came time to start the issue: the rapid-fire pace

patterned on one of those old Merrie Melodie cartoons with the voice-over narration—"Night falls." And kaboom. Night falls—now in place. That was all I needed.

As I got closer, I needed the name of the arch-rival. To keep the hockey "motif" I thought I should use a hockey player's name. Hockey and comic books not having much of a cross-over audience (south of the border, anyway) I figured I was stuck with Wayne Gretzky—or "Grain" Wetsky (which I thought worked pretty well in context, picturing a grain sheaf on the front of his sweater). The problem with that? There is absolutely nothing funny about Wayne Gretzky (as anyone who saw his guest-host appearance on *Saturday Night Live* can attest). Unbelievably brilliant hockey player, unbelievably modest, unbelievably gracious, unbelievably soft-spoken, unbelievably wealthy fellow. I mean, ha. Ha.

Mark Messier? Maybe for New Yorkers who still remember when he led the New York Rangers in breaking *their* Stanley Cup drought of *fifty*-odd years (and the way he delivers his "Chip?" line in his potato chip commercial really cracks me up, but I'm not sure you could build a character out it).

So, I thought, let's go with an "inside joke" for hockey fans.

Any old player.

Pick a name.

Any player, past, present or Junior A (Junior, eh?).

As tends to happen (with seriously alarming regularity) in my life, with a little less than a year to go until *my* "hockey player issue," Todd McFarlane got sued for, like, 26 *million* dollars for using the name of St. Louis Blues enforcer Tony Twist as the nickname of a gangster in *Spawn.*

Seriously. Twenty-six mil.

It was overturned on appeal, naturally (serious applause to Todd for not "caving" like Time-Warner and his other "pussy" co-defendants) (and a slap on the pee-pee to all those "pseudo-guys" who jumped all over the Toddmeister's case about it when the original verdict was returned).

Well.

I definitely wanted some kind of tie-in with *that* strange bit of synchronicity. So, one morning when I was lying in bed (awake for all of fifteen seconds—the life of a writer) I thought, "Paul Coffey?" And then I thought, "Paul Coffey...*Annan*!"

I think I even laughed out loud. Picture Dave Sim getting ready to use a hockey player's name and along comes the Tony Twist lawsuit and the "chill effect" set in. "What if Paul Coffey sues *me* for using *his* name?" (Dave biting his fingernails with typewriter sound effect) (a light bulb comes on over his head) "I know! I'll merge his name with Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and one of the most respected and admired figures in the civilized world (and even parts of the *United States!*)! 'Coffee' will be his nickname and I'LL MAKE HIM A BLACK GUY!! Paul Coffey won't be able to sue me or he'll look like a *racist*!" (My defence attorney: "What...exactly...Mr. Coffey, do you object to in being merged with the Secretary-General of the U.N. and portrayed as a black man?" Note to self: see if there are any black defence attorneys practicing in Kitchener) (and see if Joe DiMaggio's estate would be willing to file an amicus brief over the use of "Mr. Coffee").

Being able to run with such silliness without looking over my shoulder to see whether some Time-Warner pussy is going to *let* me is one of the great perks of this job.

Not only would Cerebus have this decades-long losing streak, he would *always* lose to Paul "Coffee" Annan. And not only would he always lose, he would *always lose by a shutout*! Paul "Coffee" Annan would be like Tiger Woods to the tenth power! A Five-Bar-Gate super-hero! (I remember saying to my Dad when I was about ten: "What if someone shot a round of golf that was *all* holes-in-one—their final score was *18!"* and my Dad giving me that, "what planet are you from and how did *I* get stuck with you" look that Dads specialize in). Seemed perfectly suited to the "shaggy dog story" the issue was turning into—and an indirect "tip of the hat" to the super-hero end of my chosen medium of expression.

It wasn't until I needed a name for the *place* Cerebus would go every year to lose the big final that I decided to *really* make the connection to the Toronto Maple Leafs more direct. Initially, I thought that the closest I would get would be Northern Isshurians treating Five-Bar-Gate as a state religion—which is definitely the case with most Canadians and hockey. Moosehat Gardens is my take on Maple Leaf Gardens, the Grand Old Lady of Carleton Street which is described (invariably) as a hockey *shrine* so "state religion" is not entirely hyperbolic. Moosehat combines Moose Jaw (Saskatchewan) and Medicine Hat (Alberta), both quintessential Canadian place names—which also serves notice that "I've got my 'moose hat' on this issue": "rah rah" flag-waving being considered by *most* Canadians (myself included) to be a little *outré* where it is not considered to be downright tacky. Anyway, moose hat ear flaps secure and chinstrap pulled tight:

Bob and Doug Mackenzie had to be in there—the characters created by Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas on SCTV (with their own metaphorical "moose hats" on) in tongue-in-cheek response to the CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission) Canadian-content guidelines (which dictate the percentage of each program which has to be devoted to Canadian content). They are *still* the most readily identifiable Canadian icons in the U.S. (in my experience). Instead of Rick Moranis, I drew Kiefer Sutherland (if *he* isn't Canadian, his *dad* is)(or *was*, anyway) because Scott McCloud once told me that he thought I resembled him (which tells me that Scott has been spending way too much time staring into his computer monitor without his sunglasses on).

"Waterloo Lutheran" has to qualify as one of the most obscure "in-joke" references I've ever used. Kitchener's twin city, Waterloo, has a university which was, for years, called Waterloo Lutheran University. It lost its religious affiliation somewhere along the way and changed its name to Wilfred Laurier University. Wilfred Laurier (1841-1919) having been the seventh

man to serve as Canada's Prime Minister (1896 to 1911). So, I thought that giving *Northern Isshuria's* seventh Prime Minister the name "Waterloo Lutheran" would sort of even things up. Wilfred Laurier's image adorns the Canadian five-dollar bill, so that's what I used as the model for the Northern Isshurian five-crown note. Since Canadian bank notes are bilingual (Bank of Canada; Banque du Canada), I decided to make Northern Isshurian bank notes bilingual as well: with Bank of Isshuria and Bankee dee Isshuria.

That is, whatever the *other* language is in Northern Isshuria, it consists of adding "ee" to the end of English words. As in:

"Hey, Quebecois! Sign the constitutionee, eh? Don't be a bunchee of hosers. Or do you thinkee you're, like, better than everyone elsee? If so, then Take. Offee. Eh?"

When I got to the page with the beautiful young girl who turns out to be Paul "Coffee" Annan's unnamed wife, I started to draw a black chick and then I thought, "Hang on. Is there any reason she has to be *black?"* Both black guys that I've been the closest to in my life (Chris and Lenny) (Chris is the Lionel Ritchie lookalike on the back cover of *Church & State* volume one. White out all the hair and that's what he looks like today) both have *white* wives. Cue the "One Tin Soldier" theme from *Billy Jack,* mother, I'm a-wearin' mah Liberal Moosehat!

I thought it would be funny to give the kid *her* hair. Funny, because as far as I know that would never occur naturally. Black father? Black kids (apart from a little "au lait" in the coffee, as it were).

Say—is that offensive? Racist?

To me it just seems indisputably factual. *Originally,* I gave the kid a "Die, Honkie Bitch" tattoo on his right bicep. Which *I* thought was funny (and Ger laughed when we were going over the issue and I told him about it) but something made me go, "Mmm. Maybe not," once I had it in there (even though I couldn't stop laughing). Racist? Misogynistic? Anti-mother? Anti-miscegenation? I don't know. I chose to leave it out. Score one for humourless self-censorship.

Then there was Paul "Coffee" Annan's knee-length schlong. If *I'm* going to draw a black athlete, "da *schvartze* is gonna have a *schvance* on 'im! Oy vey!" (anti-semitic? I don't know. See above) "Like a baby's arm with an apple in its fist," in the immortal words of Lenny Bruce ("C'mon, you son-of-a-gun, whip it out here. Let's have a look.")

(This was one of my motivations in deciding to write this piece, by the way, as I started to explain to Ger on one of his weekly trips in to the office. "I think I should try to take the 'edge' off it a little bit." Ger grinned doubtfully and pulled at the inside seam on his pants next to his knee. "Why do you think they call them 'knee-grows'?" I cracked up. Maybe we're *both* racists—or maybe the people who will think we are a little too 'thin-skinned' for their own good. "This is a *feminist* bookstore, sir. We don't *have* a humour section.")

"Laura Concord Sweets & Swine" is a take on Laura Secord, a chain of Canadian stores selling some of the best chocolate in the world (particularly the orange creams: see *Cerebus* 18, done at a time when I was hopelessly addicted to Laura Secord orange creams). I *forget* the legend of Laura Secord (to be honest), but it has something to do with her slipping through American lines to deliver a warning to the British/Canadian troops in the War of 1812. You know, the war Americans never hear about because *WE WON! (burned down yer durned White House and everything. Nyah!).* Anyway, since Moosehat Liberalism seemed to have become a recurring motif in this issue, I decided to make it Laura *Concord,* thus invoking Concord, Massachusetts, the scene of a battle in the American War of Independence (April 19, 1775) where the *Americans* kicked *British* butt.

King Solomon, I'm sure you'll agree, couldn't be any more even-handed than that.

McShawinigan Tavern is a reference to current Prime Minister Jean Chretien's hometown of Shawinigan, Quebec (and the current "Shawinigate" scandal which may yet topple his record-setting third consecutive majority Liberal government).

What else?

I pencilled the panel with the referee in the "last game" and went out to run an errand. When I got back I thought, "Hey! It looks like Michael ('Kramer') Richards!" So, I just went with that. Maybe he has a Canadian uncle or he once went fishing on Georgian Bay or something. "Van Hellemond" I got from veteran NHL linesman Andy Van Hellemond, a name which always struck me as "essence of Canadian". "Van" (Dutch for "son"—so you've got yer multiculturalism covered), "Hell" (English for "hell," so you've got yer English-Canadian covered) and "monde" (French for "world," so you've got yer French-Canadian covered).

Son of Hell World!

It gives good "moose hat," eh?

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*A definite highlight of my trip to Columbus, Ohio was a visit to The Thurber House, the restored home of James Thurber "during his college years" and which figured in many of his wonderful stories and essays (including my own favourite "The Night the Ghost Got In"). It's located at 77 Jefferson Avenue (*most *of the Columbus residents I talked to—rather sheepishly—admitted they had never been there). It's worth the trip— if only because of the free illustrated brochure with a portrait of Thurber by another Ohio-native-son-who-made-good, Milton Caniff.*

I told them that they should have the Bone *books in the gift shop. Whatever I may think of Jeff (and/or his* Comics Journal *interview) there is, to me, no question that his work belongs in the gift shop of the restored house of a Columbus, Ohio writer...and* cartoonist. *If the* Bone *books are* not *in the gift shop because the* New Yorker *is considered "up* here" *and a graphic novel is considered "down* there*"...well...that just seems more than a touch "uppity" to me. And, if so, it would be the only example of "uppity-ness" I have yet found in Columbus, Ohio.*

Besides one.

SHORTLIST
THE FIRST ANNUAL
HOWARD EUGENE DAY MEMORIAL PRIZE

The Shortlist has been selected by Dave Sim from those works submitted for consideration by the exhibitors at the 2nd Annual Small Press & Alternative Comics Expo (SPACE) in Columbus, Ohio.

The Winner of the First Annual Day Prize will be selected by Gerhard. The prize consists of a five-hundred-dollar cash award, a commemorative plaque and an eight-page excerpt from the winning entry to appear in the September issue of *Cerebus* (issue 270).

The Shortlist nominees have all agreed to make available to anyone mentioning the Day Prize in their letter an autographed copy of their nominated work for the price (in U.S. dollars) indicated below their listing. The works are listed alphabetically, by title.

All the Wrong Places
Graphic Novel
Tom Galambos
Laszlo Press
34 Moorland Road
Rochester New York
14612
tgalambos@yahoo.com
http://www.laszlopress.com
(eighteen dollars)

Askarihodari
First issue
Glenn Brewer
(Scott Woods, Arron Putnam, Edward Lense, Carolyn Brewer, Editors)
P.O. Box 151054
Columbus, Ohio
43215
(three dollars)

Darklanders
First issue
Philip Alan Gregory
(Lynn J. Gregory & Elaine M. Ohl, Editors)
8246 East Market Street
PMB 141
Warren, Ohio
44484
Darklanders@ aol.com
http://www.darklanders.com
(four dollars)

Faith: A Fable
Graphic Novel
Bill Knapp
Carbon-Based Books
1270 Jackson Avenue
Lakewood, Ohio
44107
bknapp1@ juno.com
http://www.carbonbasedbooks.com
(ten dollars and twenty-five cents)

Happy Ever After in the Marketplace
Mini-comic
Tony Consiglio
Double Cross!
60-13 68th Ridge Road
Ridgewood, New York
11385
718.497.3722
doubletony@aol.com
http://members.aol.com/minitony
(four dollars)

Jumbo Jape
Mini-comic
sean Bieri
1028 Vinewood
Detroit, Michigan
48216
elefish@metrotimes.net
(four dollars)

Reporter
First issue
Dylan Williams
PO Box 10952
Portland, Oregon
97256-0952
Reporter56@Hotmail.com
(four dollars)

$2.25USA•$3.50CANADA•£1.50UK